

It is submitted that the value of the output for 1913—viz., £549,106—is quite an appreciable contribution to the total exports of the Dominion.

The necessity for the proper control and development of the kauri-gum lands, and the general importance of the industry, justifies your Commissioners in concluding that it would be in the best interests of the State to set up a small subdepartment to take charge of the Crown gum lands and the industry generally. Such a department might be made self-supporting by imposing an export duty of, say, £1 per ton on kauri-gum. It is the well-considered opinion of your Commissioners that the imposition of such a duty would not be objected to by the gum-digger, on whom the burden would undoubtedly fall, for he recognizes that a proper system of control of the industry would give an added value to his product quite in excess of the small impost which would be placed on the individual digger.

There is a prevailing opinion among the gum-diggers that if there was a system of grading the gum inaugurated by the State it would be highly beneficial to the workers engaged in the industry. There is, however, a marked difference of opinion as to the effects and practicability of grading existing among gum-buyers, some of whom are decidedly favourable to the proposal, others again unhesitatingly declare that grading is quite impracticable. Your Commissioners are of opinion that there are no difficulties in regard to grading gum that could not be overcome, and that it is not only practicable to grade the gum, but also desirable in the interests of the workers engaged in the industry.

THE WINE-SHOPS ON THE KAURI-GUM RESERVES.

Your Commissioners feel that they would be failing in their duty to the State if they neglected to draw attention to the pernicious effects of the wine-shops established on several of the kauri-gum reserves on the northern gumfields. From Kaitaia northwards everywhere the same tale was told. Reputable residents of the districts affected waited upon your Commissioners at each centre visited. The evidence of one witness, a Justice of the Peace, who is a man of high standing and repute, in referring to this matter said that the wine-shops existing in different parts of the various gumfields should not be allowed to continue in any shape or form, and that they were conducive to great immorality. He further stated that he has known cases where the kauri-gum was bartered for wine. The usual experience was that as soon as a gum-field was opened the wine-shops followed.

In the opinion of your Commissioners the traffic is having a most harmful effect in the districts mentioned, and is doing a great injury to a large number of the Maori people, whole families of whom for many months of the year camp on the fields and engage in gum-digging.

SUMMARY.

Summarized the conclusions and recommendations of your Commissioners are:—

1. That the reservation be uplifted from various kauri-gum reserves as per schedule, of a total area of 71,164 acres.
2. That the Crown gum lands have been mismanaged in the past greatly to their detriment.
3. That better methods of management are essential.
4. That the development of the Crown gum lands under judicious management offers a practicable solution of the "unemployed" difficulty for many years to come.
5. That the settlement of the gum lands by men possessing little or no capital can only be brought about by a gradual process.
6. That the State should break in and develop the gum lands before disposal, and that such a process would be an economic success.
7. That section 20 of the Land Act be amended so as to widen its scope.